


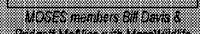
**From:** Joe Dorant <jdorant@moses-ma.ccsend.com> on behalf of Joe Dorant <jdorant@moses-ma.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 30, 2012 3:02 PM  
**To:** Hanchett, James (DPH)  
**Subject:** NEWS: Banding Together...MassWildlife & MassDOT Join Forces

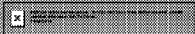
Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)

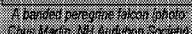
## Banding Together: MassWildlife & MassDOT Join Forces

*Four raven chicks banded and a falcon nest set  
under Quinapoxet Bridge in Holden, Mass.*

  
MOSES member Bridget McAlice  
straps in!

  
MOSES members Bill Davis &  
Bridget McAlice with MassWildlife  
and Mike Dygon & Thaddeus Gursula  
of MassDOT.

  
The Bridge Master Inspector 50 gets  
into position.

  
A banded peregrine falcon (photo  
Chris Martin, NH Audubon Society).

MOSES member Bridget McAlice carefully secured her harness on the side of I-190 as cars and trucks whizzed by. This was her first time in a "bucket" destined to dip below the Quinapoxet Bridge, located in Holden, Massachusetts, to band four raven chicks for federal and state tracking purposes.

McAlice is a wildlife biologist with the Central Mass. Wildlife District of the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife and a hearty soul to brave the area's highest point over the Quinapoxet River, a key factor to its selection as a location for the peregrine falcon nest. She explains, "Falcons don't build nests. They normally tell rock ledges or exposed cliff sides home. However, there are not too many of those in Massachusetts, so balconies and window ledges are often targeted. We hope this pre-emptive nest will encourage a pair of peregrine falcons to make this bridge home."

Four members of the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists, including McAlice, Bill Davis, district supervisor of the Central Mass. Wildlife District, and MassDOT District 3 Bridge Inspectors Mike Dygon and Thaddeus Gursula, with Don Price and John Belg from MassDOT District 2 operating the bucket truck, were part of the joint effort.

The approximately 6-7 week old raven babies did not have all their mature flying feathers, so applying the uniquely numbered bands was a fairly easy task. McAlice notes, "The parents aren't aggressive, so it was pretty easy to place the band around each chick's leg. These numbers are then entered into a national database for state and federal tracking purposes." Assisting McAlice was Mike Morely, a wildlife technician, also with MassWildlife.

Central Mass. District Supervisor Bill Davis aptly points out that these bands are a type of bird social security number. He says each ring includes a consistent four-digit prefix and a unique five-digit number, allowing for easier tracking when out in the field. MassWildlife bands hundreds of geese, flocks of bald eagles, flocks of falcons and numerous waterfowl annually. He shares, "Reading the numbers requires a fair amount of patience, to say the least. We use an 80 power astronomical telescope and read from about 30 yards away, be it winter, spring, summer or fall."

Wayne MacCallum, director of the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, shares, "The banding of common ravens is instrumental in our research and understanding of this adaptable bird and its recent appearance as a nesting species in the Commonwealth. Band sightings and returns relating to the chicks under the Quinapoxet Bridge will further shed light on their dispersal, habitat preferences, survival and seasonal movements."

Key to the operation was accessibility. MassDOT's Mike Dygon explains, "We used a Bridge Master Inspector 50, one of just two in the state. This 23-ton truck can articulate up to 50 feet, spanning upwards of three lanes as it telescopes under the bridge to any point desired." Typically used for bridge inspection, particularly those over water, the Bridge Master 50 features an enclosed, automatic leveling, fiberglass, three-person bucket and provides a horizontal under bridge reach of 48 feet, a vertical down reach of 55 feet and a vertical up reach of 32 feet.

MassDOT Secretary Richard A. Devey is happy to support the effort. He says, "Bringing multiple agencies together, particularly as it relates to our environment, is a project I and the department support 100%."

Mary Griffin, commissioner of the Department of Fish & Game, concurs, "We are excited to pair up with MassDOT for this important project. Peregrine falcons are a beautiful raptor and working with fellow Commonwealth agencies to sustain this species is a valuable and worthwhile effort."

It is hoped that the placement of the peregrine falcon nesting tray - a little further down under the bridge - will encourage this state-listed species to establish a new nesting territory. Peregrines favor natural cliff faces for nest sites, but have shown interest in man-made structures, such as buildings and bridges, as a substitute. McAlice points out, "Falcons can be pretty picky about their homes. If the box is built incorrectly or installed in the wrong position, it will be much less likely to attract a pair. This nest is a shallow box, filled with pea stone, and includes several holes to allow for proper drainage." It is believed the I-90 bridge over the Quinapoxet, the tallest highway bridge in Worcester County and ideally situated near the Wachusett Reservoir, will prove particularly attractive to the species.

Davis notes, "Massachusetts has worked hard to restore the peregrine falcon population in particular through a very proactive management process. In an effort to help this population, we released young falcons to the wild from the roof of the McCormack Post Office in Boston, so they would think Massachusetts was their natural home. This effort started back in 1982 with a population of zero. We had our first nest at the Custom House in Boston back in the late 80s and now we proudly provide man made homes to 34 pairs of eagles and 36 pairs of falcons located across the Commonwealth."

Why this is important, Davis says, "After DDT and other materials were banned back in the 70s, it took some time for the environment to cleanse itself and for these populations to gradually build. Having the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs in the area, both an ideal habitat for eagles, falcons and ravens, it made sense for MassWildlife to take an active role in jumpstarting the population."

Reasons on why protecting and advancing this population is important is three fold. Davis explains, "Legally, we are mandated to conserve these wildlife species at both the state and federal level, morally, we are responsible as the stewards of this planet and need to look after the other animals that depend on it, and perhaps most important, socially this particular population proved to be an excellent environmental indicator. For example, when their populations crashed due to the pesticide affecting their ability to reproduce, it was this that alerted humans to the dangers of DDT."

As Massachusetts' bird population takes flight, Joe Dorant, president of the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists sums it up nicely, "This banding together of two diverse state agencies to advance and preserve a natural resource further proves that public employees are truly dedicated to the greater good and the collective best interest of all. Kudos to our members, as well as the great work of MassWildlife and MassDOT."

Special thanks to Miss. State Trooper Jeff Roger,  
Miskey Splaine, Bill Davis, Bridget McAlice,  
Mike Morely, Mike Dygon, Thaddeus Gursula,  
Don Price and John Belg.

Forward this email



This email was sent to james.hanchett@state.ma.us by jdorant@moses-ma.org |  
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | [Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



